



WORK OF ART...Taib (left) admiring a sculpture made by Unimas lecturers that was presented to him as a memento after opening the 'Systematic Waste Management Seminar and Workshop.' Also seen is Bujang Nor (right) and partly hidden at left is Mawan.

Good life comes with a price

People need to chip in to clean up the environment: Taib

By Raynore Mering

KUCHING: The challenges faced by the State government in improving Sarawak's waste management system are not merely physical but also in convincing the public that they too must pay a price for an effective system.

Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud said yesterday said that the public must accept that they had to pay for the services offered by the system as a "way of life."

He said for the public to enjoy a life of good quality, it was important to ensure that the environment was protected to create a conducive atmosphere for continuous growth.

And the task of protecting the environment was becoming more challenging with the constant increase of the population in urban areas and the amount of waste they discharged.

He added that people must be conscientious about the rising cost of inflation and it was unrealistic to think that the cost of waste and environmental protection would not go up.

"The day will come when this will happen and we have to pay like we do for anything else, like our road tax and so on. We should also give allowance to the fact that waste management will cost a bit more in the future," said Taib.

Speaking to reporters after opening the 'Systematic Waste

Management Seminar and Workshop' here, he said the government had so far been able to absorb the cost of a waste management system with subsidies.

But he said the government could not give subsidies continuously or it would have to go back to its old ways of taxing people heavily to finance jobs and to build infrastructure to protect the environment.

With the change in the country's economic system into one that was more liberalised, he said increasing taxes to finance public services and utilities was no longer in line with the way the country was developing.

"Some of the costs for public life must be borne by the people themselves," said Taib.

Touching on the need for the public to pay for services in his speech when opening the seminar earlier, he said in Sarawak, the local government's charges had not been revised in 30 years and therefore the people must be willing to "sacrifice part of their income to make their environment much more sustainable."

Taib also said that the companies involved in waste management activities, including recycling, must put consumers first in deciding fees that would be charged for their services.

"There must be a generally fair distribution of burden of cost (between consumers and the industries) to make sure that the system gets good support from the people," he said.

The three-day seminar and

workshop was jointly organised by the Centre for Technology Transfer & Consultancy of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), International Organisation for Biotechnology and Bioengineering (IOBB), Australia, and Wye College of University of London in the United Kingdom.

Its objective is to provide a venue for the discussion of problematic and specific waste management. Participants were taught basic theories on microbial aspect of degradation, management of wastes and different classifications of waste types.

Natural Resources and Environment Board (NREB) deputy chairman Dr James Dawos Mamit had presented the seminar's keynote address entitled 'A new systematic approach to the management of solid waste in Sarawak'.

The other papers presented were 'Waste is a valuable resource for sustainability,' 'Organic waste composting — Recycling for sustainable development' and 'Status of sanitary landfills and rubbish dumping grounds in Sarawak - Some environmental aspects'.

They were presented by Prof H W Doelle of IOBB, Prof J M Lopez-Real of the University of London and from NREB were Eulogius J Rajang, C T Tsiung and Paul J Sinjeng.

Also present at the opening ceremony were Environment and Public Health Minister Datuk William Mawan Ikom and Unimas Board of Directors chairman Datuk Amar Tan Sri Bujang Mohd Nor.